



B. J. Walker, Commissioner

Georgia Department of Human Resources • Division of Public Health • Stuart Brown, M.D., M.P.H., Director  
2 Peachtree Street NW • Suite 15470 • Atlanta, Georgia 30303-3142  
404-657-2700 • FAX: 404-657-2715

Dear Administrator:

Every year, especially from November through February, long term care facilities across the state experience outbreaks of viral gastroenteritis. Viral gastroenteritis, characterized by vomiting and diarrhea, is often caused by infections with noroviruses or other related viruses. This season, we have seen an increase in reported outbreaks with 81% of recognized norovirus outbreaks in Georgia occurring in long term care facilities.

During an outbreak in a long term care facility, many residents become ill, some seriously enough to require hospitalization. In addition, staff may also become infected, leading to staffing shortages that may impact resident care. Therefore, it is important to prevent outbreaks or to recognize outbreaks early so that action can be taken to limit the impact. Please remind your staff to be on the alert for even one or two cases of unexplained vomiting or diarrhea among patients or staff, especially during winter months.

The Georgia Department of Human Resources, Division of Public Health and the Office of Regulatory Services have developed materials containing information about norovirus prevention and control in institutional settings. We encourage you to visit our website at <http://health.state.ga.us/epi/outbreak/norovirus.asp> for a fact sheet about norovirus, as well as some general guidelines that we have developed for nursing homes experiencing an outbreak.

If you suspect an outbreak in your facility of viral gastroenteritis, please apply the suggestions from the enclosed materials and contact your District Health Office for assistance in assessing and controlling the outbreak. If you have questions, please contact Cindy Burnett or Carrie Shuler at 404-657-2588.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Susan Lance", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Susan Lance DVM, PhD  
State Epidemiologist  
Director, Epidemiology Branch

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "David Dunbar", written over a light blue horizontal line.

David Dunbar  
Director, Long Term Care Section  
Office of Regulatory Services